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ABSTRACT

Thirty-five books and articles about television and sex roles that were published between 1954 and 1983 are listed in this annotated bibliography. Among the topics covered in the articles and books are female stereotypes, the influence of television on children's perception of sex roles, a survey and summary of the research on sex roles and mass media up to 1975, sexism and how it relates to the media, a sociological analysis of sex roles, a comparison of newspaper and television portrayals of women in the roles of criminal suspect and law enforcer, content analyses of prime time programming, an analysis of prosocial/antisocial behavior on television, effects of the women's movement on sex role portrayals on television, an analysis of the portrayal of women workers, a description and interpretation of female television characters from 1950-1980, ways children identify with television characters, the use of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory to analyze character traits of both males and females, and television's portrayal of minorities and women. (EL)

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Television and Sex Roles

A Selected Annotated Bibliography

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Beuf, Ann. "Doctor,Lawyer, Household Drudge." Journal of Communication 24 (Spring 1974): 142-145.

The author interviewed children to determine if children are influenced by television to see the world as being divided into sex stereotypes. Beuf found that children who watched the most television were more likely to stereotype careers.

Brauer, Ralph, and Brauer, Donna. "Indians, Blacks, Mexicans, Women, Old People: Long Hairs and other Assorted Deviants," in The Horse, The Gun, and The Piece of Property: Changing Images of the TV Western, pp. 171-194. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1975.

The Brauers believe that all of the above groups are portrayed in TV westerns as deviants: ". . . all of them represented a threat to certain values and themes." In their interesting analysis of women in westerns they discuss four categories of female stereotypes: (1) good girl (virginal and submissive); (2) bad girl (sexual and scheming); (3) good-bad girl (not too submissive nor too scheming); (4) meddling female (the reformer who does not understand the western world. Unique analysis of a particular genre in television.

Buerkel-Rothfuss, Nancy L.; Greenberg, Bradley S.; Atkin, Charles E.; and Neuendort, Kimberly. "Learning About the Family From Television." Journal of Communication 32 (Summer 1982): 191-201.

This study surveyed children and determined that children perceive television to accurately depict reality; children believe televison is a reliable source of information concerning the behavior of family members. Since both male and female characters on prime time television shows are presented very stereotypically, the authors stress the importance of parental intervention in children's viewing. This research is concerned less with sex role problems than with parental intervention.

Busby, Linda J. "Sex-Role Research on the Mass Media." Journal of Communication 25 (Autumn 1975): 107-131.

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A comprehensive survey and summary of the research on sex roles and the mass media up to 1975. The author concludes that sex roles remain traditional, and television (and other media) do not yet reflect the gains of the women's movement. Useful bibliography.

Butler, Matilda, and Paisley, William. Women and The Mass Media: Sourcebook for Research and Action. New York: Human Services Press, 1980.

Excellent resource for studying the problem of sex roles and television. The authors first discuss sexism and how it relates to media. They also summarize past research and analyze various findings. In addition, there are sections on the inner workings of media and how media affect their audience. The authors conclude with suggestions on what can be done to produce change in the media. A vital and comprehensive work.

Charren, Peggy, and Sandler, Martin W. Changing Channels: Living (Sensibly) With Television. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1983.

Although this book focuses on prime time sex roles only very briefly, it does present some interesting observations, such as, "Older women in dramatic roles fall victim to violence even more frequently than men . . . Most female TV characters are portrayed either as housewives or entertainers, or have no discernible occupations--this in a nation where women make up 43 percent of the labor force." Very general and sometimes trivial.

Edgar, Patricia. Technical Report No. 2: Sex Type Socialization and Television Family Comedy Programmes. Australia: La Trobe University, (no date).

The report first concentrates on a sociological analysis of sex roles including the various theories of modeling, social pressures, etc. Although the bulk of the remaining report is a content analysis of Australian televison, almost all of the TV shows are American in origin: Mr. Ed, Dick van Dyke Show, Mary Tyler Moore, Greenacres, The Partridge Family, and The Courtship of Eddie's Father.

The content analysis was done in 1972. The findings include: (1) Women must marry to be fulfilled; (2) Once women marry they become dependent on their husband and concerned with trivialities; (3) Women are usually housewives, and then these women are often seen as the butt of both family and societal jokes. The report contains detailed plots from these shows to illustrate its points. No bibliography.

Estep, R. "Women's Roles in Crime As Depicted By Television and Newspapers." Journal of Popular Culture 16 (Winter 1982): 151-156.

The authors compared newspaper and television portrayals of women in the roles of criminal suspect and law enforcer. The found that women were usually portrayed as a murder suspect; in addition, the actions of these murder suspects were often linked to a romantic involvement. Furthermore, women are often portrayed as sexual manipulators or implicitly sexual. They concluded that portrayals in newspapers and television did not differ significantly: "Thus, it appears that the mass media may be producing rather homogenous images of women involved in crime, which may be reifed and become part of the mainstream culture, thereby reinforcing stereotypical female roles."

Feilitzen, Cecilia V., and Linne, Olga. "Identifying With Television Characters." Journal of Communication 25 (Autumn 1975): 51-55.

This article offers a survey of Scandinavian research on the subject of the effects of mass media on children. The most intriguing finding is that boys identify with male television characters, while girls "display a greater flexibility and will, on occasion, identify with male characters." This is a helpful article in analyzing how television's stereotypes may effect children and their views of males and females.

Frueh, Terry, and McGhee, Paul E. "Traditional Sex Role Development and Amount of Time Spent Watching Television." Developmental Psychology 11 (January 1975): 109.

Very brief research study in which the authors support the Beuf study. 40 boys and 40 girls were surveyed, and it was found that: ". . . high amounts of television watching are clearly associated with stronger traditional sex role development." This finding was consistent for both boys and girls.

Gerbner, George; Gross, Larry; Jeffries-Fox, Suzanne; and Signorielli, Nancy. "Cultural Indicators: Violence Profile No. 9." Journal of Communication 28 (Summer 1978): 176-207.

An interesting analysis of violence on television: (1) Females are portrayed as less violent, but they are victimized more often; (2) Women who are unemployed and married escape violence more than single, working women do; (3) Working women are often portrayed as villains. An in-depth article with several tables.

Goff, David H.; Goff, Lynda Dysart; and Lehrer, Sara Kay. "Sex-Role Portrayals of Selected Female Television Characters." Journal of Broadcasting 24 (Fall 1980): 467-478.

The researchers studied "the relationship between both the sex role and the sex of viewers and viewers' perception of the sex role depicted by five female characters selected from popular prime time television programs placed in contemporary American settings." The authors used the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) tool and concluded that viewers' sex roles are strongly related to a character's perceived sex roles. A complicated but worthy study.

Greenberg, Bradley S., ed. Life in Television: Content Analyses of U.S. TV Drama. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1980.

Content analyses of American prime time programming for three television seasons (1975-6, 1976-7, 1977-8). Very detailed, comprehensive work giving statistics on many areas of sex role stereotyping on television. Many tables and charts; one of the definitive works.

Among the most pertinent findings are: (1) Both males and females are stereotyped by behaviors. Women are seen doing housework, shopping, caring, for children, etc., while men are seen drinking, driving, participating in sports, etc.; (2) men are more likely to make plans and give orders; (3) women often ask for and require assistance from males.

Haskell, Deborah. "The Depiction of Women in Leading Roles in Prime Time Television." Journal of Broadcasting 23 (Spring 1979): 191-196.

This study is a content analysis of all prime time television shows that aired during July and August 1977 in which women were principal or featured characters. The author concluded that women were being depicted more fairly than in the past; women characters were seen with jobs and running households without male assistance, moving into formerly male dominated jobs, and interacting with males in a more natural way. This is one of the few studies that finds positive changes have been made in this area.

Kaniuga, Nancy; Scott, Thomas; and Gada, Elden. "Working Women Portrayed on Evening Television Programs." The Vocational Guidance Quarterly 23 (December 1974): 134-137.

Content analysis of prime time television shows in October and November 1972. The authors conclude that

television portrays working women inaccurately; the typical working woman on television is young, single, and employed in a traditional field. The article makes some interesting points based on statistics, which though they may be dated, do give a good indication of television's inaccuracies in terms of sex roles in the work force.

Kaplan, S.J. and Baxter, L.A. "Antisocial and Prosocial Behavior on Prime-time TV." Journalism Quarterly 59 (Autumn 1982): 478-482.

The author analyzed prosocial/antisocial (attempts by a character to help or harm another character) behavior on television. The found that two-thirds of all antisocial acts were committed by males. In addition, a female who engaged in antisocial behavior was likely to be presented as "dispositionally antisocial or aggressive".

Lemon, Judith. "Dominant or Dominated? Women on Prime-Time Television." In Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media, pp. 51-67. Edited by Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniel, and James Benet. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Content analysis of crime dramas and comedies in 1975. Although the author found that social class is a better determinant of dominance than sex, men generally are more dominant than women. In addition, comedies portray women more positively than crime dramas--unless a woman is starring in the crime drama. Interesting and thoughtful; the tables are particularly useful.

McNeil, Jean C. "Feminism, Femininity, and the Television Series: A Content Analysis." Journal of Broadcasting 19 (Summer 1975): 259-272.

The author studied the effects of the women's movement on sex role portrayals in television. She concludes that television has, for the most part, ignored the existence of the women's movement. As a result, female characters are still fewer and less important; marriage and parenthood are considered central to a woman's life; women workers are in traditional fields, and they are subordinate to men; and females are more passive than males. This study supports the findings of several other studies.

Manes, Audrey L., and Melnyk, Paula. "Televised Models of Female Achievement." Journal of Applied Social Psychology 4 (October-December 1974): 365-374.

The authors analyzed prime time Canadian television to determine how women workers were portrayed. They found that women who held jobs were more likely to be portrayed as being unsuccessfully married. They "speculate that

female television viewers would therefore be prone both to learn and inhibit achievement-oriented behavior." This study suggests that television may have an inhibiting effect on the success of women.

Meehan, Diana M. Ladies Of The Evening: Women Characters on Prime-Time Television. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1983.

The author describes and interprets female television characters from 1950-1980. She classifies the characters into the following categories: imp, goodwife, harpy, victim, bitch, siren, courtesan, witch, and matriarch. Interesting if subjective study.

Miller, M. Mark, and Reeves, Byron. "Dramatic TV Content and Children's Sex-Role Stereotypes." Journal of Broadcasting 20 (Winter 1976): 35-50.

Miller and Reeves conducted a survey to determine in what ways boys and girls identify with television characters. They found that boys identify more with male characters, while girls identify with both males and females. In addition, children who view counter-stereotypical occupations for both sexes will often begin to perceive these counter-stereotypical as appropriate. The results indicate that children learn from what they view--and if sex role portrayals are made more positive, children will no longer cling to stereotypes.

Peevers, Barbara Hollands. "Androgeny on the TV Screen? An Analysis of Sex-Role Portrayal." Sex Roles 5 (December 1979): 797-809.

The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) was utilized to analyze the character traits of both males and females in 1975 and 1976. It was determined that male characters were more sex-typed than females; more than twice as many female characters scored in the androgenous range than males. Consequently, the female role was more diversified and human. The author concluded that "the traditional male role is highly valued; so valued it is overdramatized in television programs." The use of the BSRI as a tool is unique and interesting.

Reinhard, Jean Cheyne. "The 52-Percent Minority." In Small Voices & Great Trumpets, pp. 169-215. Edited by Bernard Rubin. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980.

The author analyzes several television shows which feature females as lead characters, such as Mary Tyler Moore Show, Police Woman, and Charlie's Angels. Although there does appear to be less stereotyping than in the past, most television programming "still presents women in a

retrogressive and demeaning manner." Reinhard suggests that more meaningful changes will be made only when women gain more powerful positions in the television industry. The author uses a general approach when discussing the problem of sex roles.

Seggar, John F. "Imagery of Women in Television Drama: 1974." Journal of Broadcasting 19 (Summer 1975): 273-282.

The article is based on a content analysis concerned with how the female role was portayed in 1974: (1) Females were portrayed as less competent than males in performing tasks; (2) Females were usually dominated by males; (3) Females were usually married; (4) Females were usually more fashionably dressed than males. Seggar is one of the important researchers in this area (see other Seggar studies below.)

Seggar, John F. "Television's Portrayal of Minorities and Woman, 1971-75." Journal of Broadcasting 21 (Fall 1977): 435 - 446.

Seggar uses a five year research study to determine trends for women characters. He found that female characters grew in numbers, while male characters declined slightly. However, females "are now where they were in 1953 as far as proportionate representation is concerned."

Seggar, John F.; Hafen, Jeffrey K.; and Hannonen-Gladden, Helena. "Television's Portrayals of Minorities and Women in Drama and Comedy Drama 1971-80." Journal of Broadcasting 25 (Summer 1981): 277-288.

A more extensive research study of trends for women. Although women have grown proportionately in roles on television, minority females are almost invisible. In addition, males are still over-represented, while females are still under-represented. The authors believe these trends point to two problems: limited cultural exposure and the lack of role models for minorities and women.

Seggar, John F., and Wheeler, Penny. "World of Work on TV: Ethnic and Sex Representations in TV Drama." Journal of Broadcasting 17 (Spring 1973): 201-214.

Content analysis of prime time television in 1971: (1) There was a gross under-representation of females; (2) female minorities were rarely seen; (3) both males and females were shown in stereotypical roles--but female roles were more limited. The authors recommend that women be given more roles and a greater diversity of roles.

Signorielli, Nancy. "Marital Status in Television Drama: A Case of Reduced Options." Journal of Braodcasting 26

(Spring 1982): 585-597.

Content analysis of prime time programming during the fall of each year from 1975 to 1979: (1) Formerly married women are often seen as less attractice, selfish, somewhat unhappy, less feminine, holding jobs and being somewhat older; (2) single men are portrayed more positively, but married men and formerly married men are not portrayed as negatively as formerly married women; (3) men on television outnumber women three to one.

Smythe, Dallas W. "Reality As Presented By Television." Public Opinion Quarterly 18 (Summer 1954): 143-156.

One of the earliest content analyses done on network television. Very descriptive, detailed report which shows that not too many changes have been made: (1) Males outnumber females 2 to 1 in roles; (2) males (average age of 38) are older than females (average age of 33); (3) the female occupation is usually housewife.

Stocking, S. Holly; Sapolsky, Barry S.; and Zillman, Dolf. "Sex Discrimination in Prime Time Humor." Journal of Broadcasting 21 (Fall 1977): 447-457.

Content analysis of prime time programming in November 1975 in an effort to determine whether females were more often the butt of jokes. The authors conclude that neither sex was discriminated against; males were ridiculed as frequently as females. However, males were most often the victims of hostile humor.

Tedesco, Nancy S. "Patterns in Prime Time." Journal of Communication 24 (Spring 1974): 119-124.

Content analysis (including tables) of prime time programming from 1969 to 1972. The findings include: (1) females were usually in light or comic roles, while males had more serious roles; (2) almost two-thirds of the females were unemployed, while almost one-third of the males were unemployed; (3) females were often portrayed as attractive, fair, sociable, warm, happy, peaceful, and youthful, while males were often portrayed as powerful, smart, rational, tall, and stable. The author also discusses the implications of such stereotyping in this seminal work.

Tuchman, Gaye; Daniels, Arlene Kaplan; and Benet, James, ed. Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media. Introduction by Gaye Tuchman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Tuchman discusses the causes, results, and implications of sex role stereotyping on television.

Previous research is reviewed, and Tuchman discusses at length two major theories of mass media and sex roles: "reflection hypothesis" (the media is a mirror of society's values) and "symbolic annihilation" (the media ignores and/or trivializes women and their roles). Well written and thoughtful.

Turow, Joseph. "Advising and Ordering: Daytime, Prime Time." Journal of Communication 24 (Spring 1974): 138-141.

Turow found that males gave directions in the television episodes analyzed much more than females did. In addition, advice given by males was usually concerned with "masculine" matters, while female advice was given on "feminine" matters. Turow concludes: "Male-female knowledge steretypes formed an integral part of the advising and ordering patterns in this sample . . . "

Turow, Joseph. "Casting for TV Parts: The Anatomy of Social Typing." Journal of Communication 28 (Autumn 1978): 18-24.

Turow interviewed various writers, producers, directors, casting directors, and talent agencies in Los Angeles to determine how characters are selected. The interviewees pointed to two qualities they look for in filling a particular role: credibility and "visual balance." Although this article is not specifically concerned with sex roles, it is helpful in determining how stereotyping occurs in the casting of roles.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Window Dressing on the Set: Women and Minorities in Television. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Office, 1977.

Important government study analyzes the portrayal of women and minorities in television. Numerous tables and statistics are especially valuable.